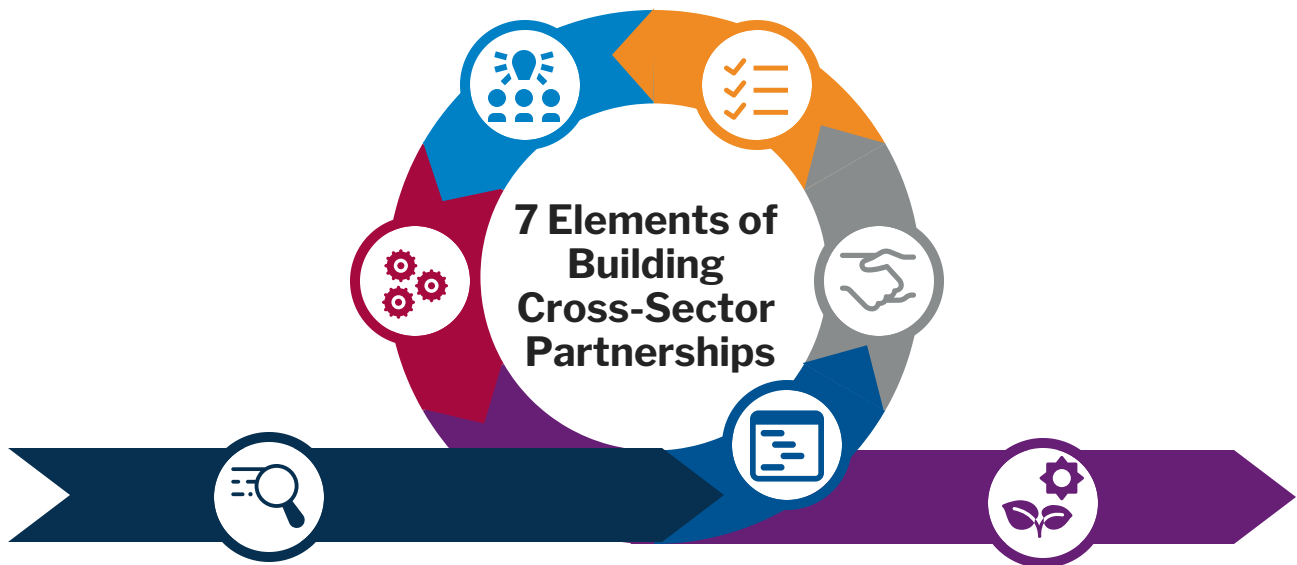




NATIONAL CENTER FOR
**HOUSING
+ HEALTH**



7 Elements of Building Cross-Sector Partnerships Overview

July 2026



Shared commitment to advancing cross-sector solutions

Building thriving communities with housing and services at the center cannot be done by any one sector alone. CSH has long recognized the importance of working across sectors because people's needs are not defined by the rules and guidelines of one sector. In partnership with the National Center for Housing + Health, this work is further strengthened by a shared commitment to advancing cross-sector solutions. People don't stop needing housing just because they receive healthcare or other services, and they don't stop needing healthcare just because they are housed.

Improving access to housing and services requires intentional work across sectors to align funding, remove barriers, and streamline processes. Together, CSH and the National Center for Housing + Health advance cross-sector approaches that preserve and expand supportive housing. This work depends on building powerful cross-sector coalitions that include partners in justice, aging, public health, behavioral health, children & families, and other systems.

Building cross-sector partnerships is not easy, and it does not happen overnight. Fortunately, there are many examples of successful cross-sector partnerships from which to learn. CSH created the 7 Elements of Cross-Sector Partnerships Framework to support organizations in taking a thoughtful approach to building a wide range of collaborative partnerships within and across sectors. This overview reflects that framework and is informed by ongoing collaboration with the National Center for Housing + Health. A summary infographic of all 7 Elements is included in Appendix 1.



Define the Problem

When beginning engagement with another sector, it is helpful to have a clear vision of what challenge could be addressed through partnership. For organizations focused on supportive housing this usually centers on how a lack of housing aligned with services prevents people from thriving.

Consider the following questions as you plan your approach to another sector:

- Is there overlap between people who are part of the sector and current or potential supportive housing tenants?
 - What housing needs do people who are part of this sector currently have? How are they currently being met? Is there a gap?
 - What services does this sector currently provide? Are these services needed by people in supportive housing? Are there barriers to accessing them that could be addressed?
 - How could creating housing with supports benefit people involved in this sector?
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Map Partners

Often, a sector is comprised of a range of partner types who are impacted by the identified challenge. As you begin to consider a cross-sector partnership, you'll want to learn more about the types of partners that exist in this sector. Engaging with subject matter experts and resources, including the National Center for Housing + Health, can help you quickly learn more about relevant partner types, such as Public Housing Authorities, Centers for Independent Living, and State Medicaid Agencies.

Once you have a good list of partner types and understand their basic roles, you can determine which partner(s) you should begin doing outreach to related to your potential partnership. It can be helpful to analyze these partners by considering the resources, power, and influence that each of them has. There are many resources that can support you in this activity, sometimes referred to as power mapping.



Build Trust

As you explore potential partnerships, it is important to take the time to build common language and understand shared values. Start by understanding your organization's primary message related to this sector and its connection to your work. For instance, for the Family & Youth Sector a key message could be, ***"Our organization partners with the family and youth sector because all children, youth, and families deserve a safe and stable place to call home and the services they need to thrive – both now and across generations."***

Each sector has its own language and values. Taking the time to learn common terms in the sector you are seeking to partner with can go a long way toward building trust. It is also important to learn enough about a potential partner to identify whether there are shared values that can serve as the foundation for future work.

The goal of this element is to proceed with organizations that are best positioned to address this challenge. We learn this by having honest conversations and seeking common ground.



Structure the Partnership

As you build trust with partners, you can start to outline how you might work together. Part of this is determining a shared vision for success that builds on the common values you have identified. Think about a message that might resonate with a particular partner or type of partner.

For instance, in the Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities sector a key message for Self-Advocates is, ***"Where you live should be your choice!"*** and a key message for Parents/Families is, ***"Supportive housing is not offered consistently and clearly to each person. Housing choice should be about what each person wants for themselves."***

These messages can help solidify a shared vision for success that can lead to a more detailed understanding of how partners will work together. In this area of partnership you'll want to clarify who will be included in the effort and how everyone would like to work together. Establishing shared agreements or norms can also be helpful at this phase. It is also important to ensure that there is broad buy-in within the partnering organizations so that the collaboration is not dependent solely on a few key staff.



Make a Plan

Now that you've established and structured a partnership shaped by trust and shared values, you can move to identifying specific actions that the partnership can take. These actions should be based on current opportunities and the strengths of each partner. Your organization may have example activities or initiatives that could be a fit.

As you develop your plan, consider a quick win as well as longer term opportunities. Your initial plan can be simple, but it is still helpful to be clear about the overall goal, activities to be performed, timeline, and responsibilities. This can help provide a framework for longer term or more in depth partnership activities.



Implement and Adjust

As you take the actions outlined in your plan, consider how you will know if your plan is successful. What outcomes are meaningful? How will you measure progress along the way so that you can adjust as needed? Make sure that your partnership has taken the time to outline how you'll know if the plan is successful. Once you've done that, you can then identify key metrics that will help you track progress toward that vision of success.

There are many metrics that are common within supportive housing, but the partnering sector likely also has their own. Consider how you can use measures that are relevant to all partners or develop new ones so that you can ultimately tell the story of your efforts. A few examples of measures that are common in supportive housing efforts are:

- Housing stability
- Level of justice system interaction
- Economic mobility
- Health and well-being

Measuring outcomes as the project unfolds can also help you make adjustments as needed to promote continuous quality.



Scale and Sustain

Engaging across sectors is an ongoing and iterative process. Even successful partnerships are often difficult to sustain past an initial set of actions taken together. From the early stages of partnership development, it is critical to consider how to sustain the gains made by this partnership.

Work together with partners to identify considerations that may be important in scaling up partnership with this sector. These could include data sharing, common definitions, or aligned funding. As part of your initial brainstorming, think about what it would look like to scale up successes. What other partners would you include? How can you build on your efforts to take this initiative to the next level?

Why Do Cross-Sector Partnerships Matter?

We are inspired by working toward the universal availability of housing, services, and economic security. A shift of this magnitude requires all of us working together across sectors to reimagine the systems that we need to create the change we want to see.

CSH created this document to support us and our partners in taking a thoughtful approach to building a wide range of collaborative partnerships within and across sectors.



Define the Problem

Begin with a clear vision of what challenge will be addressed.

For supportive housing this usually centers on how a lack of housing aligned with services prevents people from thriving.



Map Partners

Understand the range of partners that are also impacted by the identified challenge.

Analyze the resources, power, and influence of potential partners.



Build Trust

Proceed with organizations that are best positioned to address this challenge.

Communicate honestly, take the time to build shared language, and identify shared values.



Structure the Partnership

Outline how the partners will work together. Describe who will be included and determine your shared vision for success.

Ensure broad buy-in within the partnering organizations.



Make a Plan

Determine what actions you will take together based on current opportunities and the strengths of each partner.

Consider a quick win as well as longer term opportunities.



Implement and Adjust

Take the actions as outlined in your plan.

Measure outcomes and make changes as needed.



Scale and Sustain

Consider how to sustain the gains made by this partnership.

Identify additional partnerships and actions that could lead to scaled up outcomes.

About Us



CSH (Corporation for Supportive Housing) advances affordable and accessible housing aligned with services by advocating for effective policies and funding, investing in communities, and strengthening the supportive housing field. Since our founding in 1991, CSH has been the only national nonprofit intermediary focused solely on increasing the availability of supportive housing. Over the course of our work, we have created more than 512,500 units of affordable and supportive housing and invested more than \$2.2 billion in communities. Our workforce is central to accomplishing this work. We employ approximately 170 people across 30 states and U.S. Territories. As an intermediary, we do not directly develop or operate housing but center our approach on collaboration with a wide range of people, partners, and sectors. Learn more at www.csh.org.



The National Center for Housing + Health (NCH+H) is an innovative resource dedicated to advancing the alignment between affordable housing and healthcare. The Center brings together innovations, proven models, and practical strategies and policies that help housing providers, healthcare organizations, policymakers, and community and system leaders work better together — and make a bigger difference for people and communities. Learn more at www.housinghealthcenter.org

